

FOREWORD



Recent and current events once more have reminded us of the veterans who have helped defend our nation throughout its history. Again, many courageous men and women serving in the military continue to make sacrifices in service to our country. In recognition of that sacrifice, the Veterans

Health Administration stands ready to provide the best possible medical care to veterans of today and those of the future.

That commitment means we are constantly seeking to increase our understanding of the diseases and conditions that affect veterans, and we will always pursue better ways to deliver that care. Our Office of Research and Development is a critical part of that ongoing effort.

Led by Nelda P. Wray, M.D., M.P.H., the VA research program conducts studies that focus on health issues of concern to veterans. The research enterprise covers a continuum that includes basic biomedicine, health services, rehabilitation and clinical trials.

VA's network of more than 1,200 medical centers and clinics, the nation's largest integrated health care system, offers an outstanding setting for pursuit of discoveries on the causes, development, prevention and treatment of diseases and physical impairment. This system also is particularly well-suited for exploring new approaches to delivering health care and rapidly translating research results into improved care for patients.

In 2002 alone, VA researchers expanded our knowledge of osteoarthritis, heart failure, kidney disease, lung infections, obesity, serious mental illness and many other conditions. These and other achievements will help us continually raise our standards and redefine excellence in health care for our veterans.

Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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Foreword

Our VISION

Before I assumed my duties as Chief Research and Development Officer, I worked closely with the Office of Research and Development (ORD) to create a new vision statement that would succinctly and eloquently guide our efforts to improve health care for the nation's veterans. At first glance, the vision statement may seem obvious of course a research organization's role is to improve health care. It can take years, however, before research results are translated into practical clinical tools that directly improve the quality of health care. We in ORD believe that that is simply too long.



In response, we developed our bold vision statement as a means to transform VA's research program into a leading model for the country just imagine a world in which a research result discovered today is practiced clinically tomorrow! With our vision statement leading us, we are expanding our research in the following areas:

■ **Clinical research** We are expanding our clinical research portfolio to include issues that directly affect clinical practice, with an emphasis on research that provides knowledge for the practice of evidence-based medicine. In addition to increasing funding for clinical research studies, we will develop a new initiative to dramatically increase our clinical research capacity.

■ **Translation research** The development of information through research does not necessarily mean that that information is applied at the bedside. Therefore, ORD will expand research designed to identify the barriers to the rapid translation of research and to study new organizational structures with the potential to remove those barriers. Additionally, ORD will develop new programs in translation research to train new investigators in the scientific disciplines necessary to advance the field and will provide opportunities for managers to develop an understanding of those concepts.

■ **Quality measurement** Finally, once ORD's clinical and translation research portfolios have been expanded, we must make certain that the quality of health care is improving. Therefore, to ensure that VA's research program is directly affecting the quality of health care and to monitor the differences our efforts are making, we will expand our health services quality measurement portfolio.

As you can see, this is a very dynamic, exciting time for VA Research. With our compelling vision statement as our guide, we are ensuring that the VA Research community never loses sight of its ultimate goal to turn research results into improved health care for the nation's veterans and we are paving the way for today's VA Research to lead tomorrow's health care.

Nelda P. Wray, M.D., M.P.H.
Chief Research and Development Officer

"TODAY'S VA RESEARCH LEADING TOMORROW'S HEALTH CARE"

*Vision Statement,
VHA Office of Research
& Development*

Our MISSION

To discover knowledge, develop VA researchers and health care leaders, and create innovations that translate into advances in health care for veterans and the nation.

Mission Statement, VHA Office of Research and Development

The mission statement above merges the key concepts that are the driving forces behind the VA research program. Dedicated investigators and research administrators throughout the VA system, some of the brightest minds in medical science, pursue new knowledge that will lead to innovations that improve health care for veterans and all Americans. In addition, we devote significant time and energy to training scientists and other health care leaders who will carry this effort into the future.

In carrying out its mission, the Office of Research and Development oversees a program that crosses a spectrum of science including biomedicine, rehabilitation, health services and clinical trials. Our four services organize their efforts around diseases and health conditions that are prevalent among veterans.

■ **Medical Research Service (MRS)** focuses on fundamental research on disorders of significance to the veteran population. It conducts research on the causes, progression, diagnosis, and treatment of virtually the full range of diseases and disorders affecting veterans. MRS supports clinicians and non-clinician researchers studying diabetes, heart disease, cancer, neurological disorders, serious mental illness and numerous other diseases and conditions.

■ **Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D)**, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2002, works to identify and evaluate innovative strategies that lead to accessible, high quality, cost-effective care for veterans. Its researchers address VA health care priorities such as: patient outcomes, quality of care, access to care, cost and cost-effectiveness, alternative organizational and delivery models, and development of new research methods and measurement tools. HSR&D's key contributions include the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative, which is designed to rapidly translate research results into improved patient care.



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■ **Rehabilitation Research and Development Service (RR&D)** supports studies that advance new knowledge to optimize rehabilitation health care for veterans with disabilities. It emphasizes research that focuses on both care and cure. Priority areas include prosthetics development and amputation prevention, diseases of the bone and joint, spinal cord injury and other neurological disorders, hearing loss, vision impairment and disabilities associated with aging.

■ **The Cooperative Studies Program (CSP)** is one of the nation's premier clinical research efforts. With the VA health care system providing an exceptional laboratory, CSP conducts large, multi-center clinical trials of new therapies and diagnostic strategies. CSP collaborates with colleagues in the United States and around the world to determine the effectiveness of treatments that may benefit veterans and the general population.

This summary provides a brief overview of the VA research enterprise. Elsewhere in this report, you will find selected research achievements from 2002, descriptions of the partnerships that strengthen our efforts, a look toward our future and listings of our special research centers. Together, these parts represent our commitment to the mission of conducting research that helps to ensure the veterans of today and tomorrow receive the superior health care they have earned.

Nelda P. Wray, M.D., M.P.H.
Chief Research &
Development Officer



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